

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met on Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 5:31 pm in the Town Hall Conference room located at 350 East Market Street, Smithfield, North Carolina.

Members Present

Donovan Radley – Chairperson
Pam Yelle – Vice Chairperson
Julia Narron
Christina Arena
Donovan Radley

Members Absent

Carmen Zepp
Luke Stancil

Staff Present

Elaine Andrews – Town Clerk

Staff Absent

Lawrence Davis – Public Works Director

Also, Present

Doris Wallace – Councilwoman District 4

Call to Order

Chairperson Donovan Radley called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

Radley extended an official welcome to Councilwoman Liaison Doris Wallace, who was in attendance.

Chairperson Donovan Radley also gave note that board member Carmen Zepp turned in her resignation from the board, citing personal conflicts at this time. Radley commended her contributions to the Appearance Commission, and thanked her for her hard work throughout the years.

The Commission also discussed and noted the absence of newly appointed member, Luke Stancil, who has not attended an Appearance Commission meeting since appointment. It was discussed that a quorum of members is the majority of seated Commission members.

Approval of Minutes

The Board discussed approval of minutes from the meetings of November 18, 2025 and January 13, 2026. Upon review the following motion was made.

Pamela Yelle made a motion, seconded by Julia Narron to approve the minutes of November 18, 2025 and January 13, 2026. Unanimously approved.

Review of Financials:

The Commission reviewed its financial statements and noted that Fund 10 (general fund/crape myrtle program) holds Donate-a-Tree-planting money with a balance of about \$1,644.99. The main expense account showed \$16,610.48 spent against a \$15,000 annual allocation—which appeared overbudget. The Board raised questions regarding clarity of the budget, about possibly being over budget and the desire to know about any additional allocations that do not appear clearly in the reports. Chairperson Donovan Radley stated plans to meet with Greg from Finance to clarify these issues and request clear knowledge for the \$10,000 transfer from a Tourism Funds grant for the Bridge Mural project. The Board also discussed interest-bearing JB George and JP George accounts, recognizing that the current report shows only interest and not full balances, and that prior-year carryover funds may not be reflected. Radley stated the JB George Fund has \$3,900 that has not been touched, and the JP George account has \$900 unspent. The Board reiterated the need for consolidated, accurate reporting and updates.

Old Business- Bridge Mural Project Update:

Chairperson Donovan Radley discussed an update regarding the Flood line Bridge Mural Project on the Greenway. Radley reported visiting the mural site, noting that it already looks good and nearly finished to an untrained eye, although there is still work to be done on the lines and the informational panels explaining the flood levels. The artist, Magen Pike, recently had medical issues, and expects to be out until the end of the month; Radley is informally assuming she may not resume full work until mid-next month. While recovering, Pike plans to work on the informational panels. Several members expressed fatigue with how long this particular project has been ongoing and a desire to see it completed. They discussed the painting process, noting that each flood line requires at least two coats of paint with drying time in between, which makes it difficult to finish in a single workday.

The Commission then focused on establishing a firm completion deadline. Members acknowledged Pike's health situation and past workload (including other public art projects in Benson), but emphasized that the town has paid more than \$15,000 for the mural and that it is reasonable to expect a finished product. They considered possible deadlines and, while some earlier dates were mentioned, they collectively agreed that April 30 would be a fair and achievable target, allowing time for her recovery and for volunteers to assist. They discussed taking a "soft" approach initially, with Radley calling Magen to explain that the Commission strongly needs the project completed by April 30, and then, if necessary, considering hiring additional help to finish the mural if she cannot meet the deadline. Members also agreed they want the required anti-graffiti protective coating applied, as specified in the contract and approved by Town Council, especially in light of recent vandalism with marker at the site and the history of other local murals being damaged. Although the artist has expressed concern that such coatings can yellow over time, the Commission noted that this mural is under a bridge with limited direct sunlight and therefore still expects the coating to be applied as originally agreed. Radley committed to follow up with Pike about the April 30 deadline and the anti-graffiti coating, and to email the Commission with Magen's response. The group also briefly agreed that, after this project is completed, they should take a break from commissioning new murals and, for any future projects, negotiate clearer contracts with specific deadlines and conditions before work begins.

New Business – Appearance Commission Code of Ordinances:

The Commission discussed devising a standard operating procedure of its rules and regulations according to the Town's Ordinance. Radley proposed an editable Google document for members to outline basic policies and procedures, member roles, and how the Commission conducts business and works with artists and contractors. Members supported the idea of assigning flexible liaison/ "area of ownership" roles (such as the Greenway, community garden, downtown/Graytown, tree program, and annual plan) to increase engagement and clarify the Commission's responsibilities. He acknowledged the assistance of the Town Clerk as being a great help assisting with Board guidance.

The discussion then focused on the community garden near the police department, where Councilwoman Doris Wallace described current conditions, grants, benches, and maintenance challenges. They agreed that the Appearance Commission should effectively adopt the community garden as an appearance project, working with town staff and volunteers to maintain and enhance the space and to prepare it for the planned resumption of the 9/11 community event, which Councilwoman Wallace stated she had done in years past.

Annual Plan

Commission members discussed creating and maintaining an annual plan. Chairperson Donovan Radley explained that most boards use an annual calendar to lay out their regular meetings, projects, volunteer events, and sponsored activities, and suggested the Appearance Commission do the same. The plan would help keep members and the public informed and could be used to promote upcoming Commission-sponsored events on Facebook and other channels. Members discussed examples of activities that could be incorporated, including volunteer days at the community garden, Greenway-related projects, and seasonal initiatives such as a Christmas decorating or holiday yard contest to recognize attractive properties and encourage participation. They agreed that developing an annual plan would help sustain engagement, provide continuity as membership changes, and ensure that ongoing projects and events are scheduled and communicated more consistently.

Street Tree Species List

Chairperson Donovan Radley discussed creating a formal street tree species list, as required by the town ordinances but never previously completed. Donovan Radley explained that the list will guide which trees can be planted along streets—especially in new developments—so that inappropriate or invasive species are avoided and infrastructure (sidewalks, curbs, utilities) is protected. He presented example recommendations, noting that all suggested trees are North Carolina natives that are hardy, low-maintenance, and ornamental, and that the ordinance calls for two categories: smaller trees (approximately 15–25 feet) and larger trees (25 feet and above) for areas without overhead lines. Members briefly discussed specific trees they like (such as American holly and river birch) and concerns about overused or vulnerable species like crape myrtles. Radley reported he is trying to obtain the Bartlett tree inventory report from Lawrence so he can incorporate its recommended species. The Commission agreed that Radley will draft a proposed street tree list, including suggested native species and size categories, and bring it back for review and input, with the intent that this list can also align with the town's Donate-A-Tree donation program.

Community Projects

The Commission discussed several community projects. For the Greytown sign area, Doris Wallace described needed corrections to the sign and a vision for a small park-like space with benches, lighting, landscaping, and a historic marker; the Commission agreed to gather cost and approval information (including possible donated plants) and bring back specific proposals. For the Greenway, Pamela Yelle agreed to inventory faded interpretive signs, note locations, seek replacement cost estimates (likely from a local printer), and first consult Parks and Recreation about potential funding or partnership; she also reported that the town is already replacing a section of fence there, which is being handled outside the Commission. The group then discussed supporting an Earth Day or similar litter-cleanup effort, expressing interest in adopting a specific area for periodic cleanups and in coordinating with existing county or town programs that supply materials and recognition signage.

Greenway Fence

Board member Pamela Yelle reported that Parks and Recreation is already replacing the Greenway fence near her home: most will be black chain-link, with the most visible section upgraded to split-rail at residents' request, and the parking lot fence moved back to reduce vehicle damage. She questioned whether this would fully address trucks backing into the fence and suggested options like relocating wheel stops and prohibiting back-in parking, but the group recognized this as a town-managed project rather than an Appearance Commission action item.

Earth Day Event

Chairperson Donovan Radley discussed potentially organizing an Earth Day–related cleanup activity. Radley noted heavily littered streets in town and described his neighborhood's Adopt-A-Highway experience, suggesting the Appearance Commission could similarly adopt an area and help lead a cleanup. Members mentioned that Johnston County holds an Earth Day event (noted as April 17) in which each town typically participates, and that Smithfield has previously done cleanups at locations such as Sarah Yard and the Greenway, with the county providing bags, gloves, and recognition signage. They agreed the best approach may be to coordinate with Parks and Recreation or county staff, identify a suitable area for the Commission to focus on, and align a cleanup project with the broader county/town Earth Day efforts rather than trying to create a completely separate event on short notice. The group also discussed the potential cleanup of Gertrude B. Johnson Park.

Adjourn:

*Pamela Yelle made a motion, seconded by Julia Narron to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:41 pm.
Unanimously approved.*

Respectfully Submitted:



Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk

